



Empower to Educate Program Summary, FY2025



Empower to Educate helps current and aspiring early childhood educators begin, advance, and sustain their career goals in child care. The project’s goal is to increase the number of people entering the early childhood workforce by offering benefits such as a free training package, an education preparation stipend, job skills training, help accessing and navigating technology, a mentorship program, and a retention bonus after six months of employment. This is accomplished through personal support from a local Workforce Advisor.

Need for the Program

Research suggests that child care programs are continuing to have difficulty finding sufficient staff to operate at their licensed capacity, contributing to the care shortage. A 2025 survey by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and First Children’s Finance found that more centers are struggling to maintain required staffing levels. It is also challenging to compete for employees in a tight labor market.¹

Addressing Barriers to Entering the Field

Marketing research for a related program, Child Care Wayfinder, identified several barriers to people entering the early childhood care and education, including low wages, lack of training and preparation, confusion about the licensing process, and technology assistance. Empower to Educate is designed to address many of these needs.

Program Outcomes

In State Fiscal Year 2025, the team of seventeen Empower to Educate Workforce Advisors supported over 500 potential early childhood educators across Minnesota to begin a career path in early childhood education. Many are in Greater Minnesota, and 42% are people of color. Almost 70% live in low-income households. Empower to Educate has administered 612 financial stipends to support participants in their career transitions and has connected participants to the Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™, TEACH Scholarships and higher education, and training and professional development opportunities. A mentoring program provided one-on-one support to 39 participants in FY25. Mentors provide support in English, Arabic, and Spanish.

Participant survey results show that 96% of Empower to Educate participants are mostly (18%) or very (79%) satisfied with their overall experience with the program. Participants rank the following program supports as the most important: 1) Meeting with a workforce advisor, 2) Receiving financial stipends, and 3) Career and education advising. More than 90% of respondents consistently report that Workforce Advisors are meeting their needs.

¹ Tran, Tu-Yuen. Minnesota child care industry remains “in crisis.” April 2, 2025. Accessed on January 26, 2026 at <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2025/minnesota-child-care-industry-remains-in-crisis>



Empower to Educate Participant Testimonials

“I have found the Empower to Educate program to be one of the best resources for child care providers, and I hope to see it continually supported as such given the growing need for child care in my area. I am forever grateful for their ongoing support!” – Veda

“Empower to Educate has helped me understand each step along the way in getting me closer to my goal of becoming a Montessori teacher. They help me to set goals and figure out what steps I need to take in order to reach them, as well as keeping track of my progress and encouraging me to continue. It’s great to have the support and resources to make this career goal a reality for me!” – Grace

“Empower to Educate has been a great resource for me! They are helping me find trainings, pay my fees for the trainings I needed, helping me write my resume, etc. They give very detailed explanations and have very good advice.” – Deqo

“Empower to Educate has provided me with resources I didn’t even know were available throughout my learning journey! I always knew I wanted to work with children but didn’t know where to start. Empower to Educate has paved the path for me and is there to answer any questions I have!” – Chelsea

“My mentor gave examples of what she does in practice, which has been very helpful! She’s also so supportive and understanding when I share anything I’m struggling with.” – Ann

“My mentor helped me see and remind me how much growth I have had over these 6 months and will continue to have!” – Elana

“Empower to Educate is helping me set goals to forward my child care career. I have become a member of MN Develop under the tutelage of an Empower advisor. I am learning how to put all the pieces into place so that when lead teaching roles arise I will feel confident that I have the skills and experience to apply.” – Katie

“I was first introduced to Empower to Educate by one of my current college professors. I filled out the application, and within a day, I had a meeting set up with my advisor. She has helped me figure out the direction of my career path in Early Childhood Education. This industry is in desperate need of staff development, and with Empower to Educate, we have that opportunity.” – Paula

“Empower to Educate is helping me become the best [early childhood] teacher I can be by providing me with resources and trainings I need and want! Having someone else help guide me in the right direction is the kind of help and gently push I needed being a busy teacher and busier mother!” –Taylor

“Empower to Educate has been a great resource with helping me find trainings and with the stipend, it will help me pay for fees and training I need to become a licensed child care provider.” – Veron